

## Archive for April, 2014

April 30th, 2014

### **Practiced Amnesia – Not Remembering What God Forgot**

What every child needs is a teacher (parent, friend) with practiced amnesia. Alzheimer's is a terrible disease robbing us of our mind and memories but practiced amnesia is a gift we give to our relationships. God is the author of practiced amnesia.

Our challenge is not to remember the things that God forgot. Heb. 8:12, "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." Paul says in Phil.3:13 "Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." How often we remember our sins (and those of others) and beat ourselves up over our past. There is a process in forgiveness that is illustrated in the Prodigal Son. "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you." When we sin, we ask God for His forgiveness and then against those we have wronged. If we need to make restitution or recompense we do it and move on. Jesus has paid the bill for our sins. We don't need to hang around and try to pay it again. Do not burden yourself with past failures. If you have asked for forgiveness –God doesn't even remember – why should you?

What would our relationships be like if each morning we introduced ourselves again to our students (our spouse, our children)? "Good morning. I am Mr. Fidellow and who are you?" "It is so good to meet you." And each morning we start all over in discovering who this student is. Practiced amnesia is also selective amnesia. Phil. 4:8 gives us direction in what to remember – "Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praise worthy – think about such things."

If every day in our classroom we would look at our children through the eyes of Christ we would treat them as new creations of the day. What happens when they stumble and fall? Back to the Prodigal Son – "I have sinned

against heaven and against you." First, they ask for God's forgiveness and then to the one they hurt. If there are consequences that need to be met, let the child meet them and then go on. A classroom note: "Sorry" is not repentance nor restitution. It is a band aid word to get me out of trouble. Sorry I got caught, sorry I didn't hit you twice or whatever. Real repentance starts with acknowledgment of what I did wrong and then a heartfelt "Please forgive me." This is not conjured up immediately. It takes time (and the child needs time to process their actions and the consequences and their heartfelt response.) And when it is over – it is over.

A personal note: Forgive and forget may not be a Biblical phrase but it is certainly a Biblical concept. Our challenge is that it is so hard to forget and that is why we keep having to practice forgiveness until we forget. Betrayal, distrust, failure and loss are all part of the human experience – forgiveness is part of the divine experience. A pastor friend once shared that even though we need to forgive, we all don't need to work in the same vineyard. If God can forgive – and forget our sins how much should we be like Him? I Cor. 13:7 "Love always hopes." If every day you start with a clean slate of forgiveness what wonderful things lie ahead for both you and your students. If you come to school with your own slate clean; if you carry no useless burdens, how free is your heart to live and love and learn?

April 29th, 2014

### **Differences in El Salvador**

Do you recall the puzzle pictures where you are asked to find the differences between two pictures? Sometimes it was the height of a tree or extra buttons on a sweater. Some things were obvious others required a more diligent search. Finding differences when you enter into another culture is often very obvious but then there are many subtle differences that you only find after careful observation.

The first difference you encounter is language. While Spanish is the language of the country there are many people who speak English (or want to.) I've learned that El Salvador is a major call center and learning English has

tremendous economic value therefore many people want to practice.

The second obvious difference you encounter is a different currency. However, El Salvador has chosen to use the US dollar as their currency. So you are not calculating a currency exchange.

Another difference that is so familiar is the presence of American retail establishments from Sears, Walmart, Nine West to McDonalds and Chili's. I have been told that there are more US franchise locations in El Salvador than in all of Central America.

Interestingly, street advertising is extremely sophisticated. Lighted small billboards grace many a sidewalk. And there are monstrous elegant colorful billboards that make use of the latest technology.

Buses are a big difference to a Western City dweller where most people travel by car and bus travel is the exception. Here the buses are full and there are plenty of them – often three or four or five in a row as they fan out across the city as well as the suburbs. Bus travel starts at four in the morning as people make their way to work. Some of our helpers take an hour or an hour and a half to get to work. When I go to Bible study at 6 A.M. the buses are already packed. We are used to seeing uniform buses with a single design and coloring. Here the buses are made by a variety of manufacturers – Nissan, Toyota, Mitsubishi, Mercedes and American School Bus – and they are all painted differently. Many of them have names – “Jesus is Savior”, “God Reigns”, “Jesus Saves.” They are painted a variety of colors. In fact one was still school yellow with “It is unlawful to pass when lights are flashing unloading/loading students” marked on the back.

Fruits are especially different. There are handfuls of fruit that are so different I don't even know their names and can't even describe their tastes. People seem to really like apples and pears as the grocery store has loads of them. Of course they are imported because they don't have that necessary cold air for their growth.

Their typical dairy – cheese made here – tends to be bland and soft, not sharp like cheddar. Milk even has a different taste. It still tastes like milk but from a tropical cow. Ice cream is great and found everywhere from stores to push carts. Their cream is not quite a sour cream but not a sweet cream. It is eaten with beans and plantains. Real sweet cream is imported from New Zealand at \$7.11 a quart – but it sure is good.

One thing that I noticed that is very different here is that nail polish does not dry as fast. When Barbara had her nails done two weeks ago she came home and said that they weren't quite dry and would I mind washing the dishes so she did not ruin her manicure. Well, they don't seem to have dried yet and I am wondering how long does it really take to dry?

More later!